

Consideration After Final Rejection

Although this response is presented after final rejection, the Examiner is respectfully requested to enter and consider the remarks, as they place the application in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 5-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ito et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,633,624) in view of pages 1225-1229 of “Boiler Operating Engineering Questions and Answers” by P. Chattopadhyay and Voedisch (U.S. Patent 3,847,805).

Claims 5-8 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hagiwara et al. (JP 2000-046992) in view of Voedisch.

The Examiner admits that Ito et al. and Chattopadhyay, as well as Hagawara et al., fail to specify the step of transferring a slurry including the resins of the mixed bed between demineralization columns and regeneration columns at a decreased slurry concentration. The Examiner takes the position that Voedisch discloses a method of regenerating a mixed resin including transferring a slurry including the resins of a mixed bed between demineralization columns and regeneration columns at a decreased slurry concentration.

The Examiner refers to lines 2-13 in column 5 of Voedisch, which describes the transfer of the ion exchange resin from the vessel to the regenerating station.

In Voedisch, the resin appears to be transferred in the form of a mixture with the sluice water (i.e., as a slurry), as in the present invention. However, Voedisch neither teaches nor suggests decreasing a concentration of the resin contained in the slurry during transfer of the slurry from the vessel to the regenerating station. Instead, Voedisch provides a vessel for an ion-exchanger or condensate polisher which enables removal of resins with considerably less sluice water than that used conventionally (see column 6, line 43 through column 7, line 1). It can be readily understood that the concentration of the resin in the slurry obtained according to Voedisch is necessarily increased in comparison with that obtained in the conventional ion-exchange vessel.

Please note that it is commonly understood in the art that the term “slurry concentration” means a concentration of solids contained in a slurry, and that “at a decreased slurry concentration”, as in Applicants’ claims 5 and 7, means “at a decreased concentration of the

resins contained in the slurry”, i.e., the term “slurry concentration” does not mean a concentration of resins in a state where the resins are contained in the vessel.

Accordingly, the Voedisch reference fails to teach or suggest transferring a slurry including the resins of a mixed bed between demineralization columns and regeneration columns at a decreased slurry concentration. Thus, Voedisch does not provide any motivation or suggestion to modify the combination of Ito et al., and Chattopadhyay, or the prior art discussed in Hagiwara et al., so as to incorporate the transferring step recited in claims 5 and 7 of the present application.

In view of the above, it is clear that the subject matter of Applicants’ claims is unpatentable over the references relied upon by the Examiner, and it is respectfully requested that the above-rejections be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Therefore, in view of the remarks, it is submitted that each of the grounds of rejection set forth by the Examiner has been overcome, and that the application is in condition for allowance. Such allowance is solicited.

If, after reviewing this response, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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